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E. Germain. *L'Afrique du sud musulmane: histoire des relations entre Indiens et Malais du Cap.* Paris: Karthala, 2007. 445 pp. Plates. EUR 20.00 (paper), ISBN 978-2-84586-710-9.

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Islam, Ethnicity, and Apartheid

This monograph is an adaptation of a doctoral thesis presented to the Ãcole des Hautes Ãtudes en Sciences Sociales several years ago and the sub-title accurately describes its contents. It traces over the course of time the relationship between the so-called Malay community of South Africa, primarily in Cape Town, and the small but significant minority of Muslim Indians in the Cape. The early pages of the book look at the making of the Malays in Dutch times out of a very heterogeneous range of people from the Indian Ocean shores together with yet others encountered at the southern tip of Africa. Slaves and exiles associated with Islamic learning both played a role in allowing Islam to take root and survive at the Cape. It is a quite well-known fact that the Afrikaans language was first captured in print using Arabic script for Islamic religious purposes; the Muslim population consisted for long of people who communicated almost entirely in Afrikaans and were slow to learn English, forms of Malay having quickly died out beyond occasional vocabulary and grammatical usages. Many early Muslims were in any case of Indian, often Bengali origin.

The nineteenth century brought the Malays an apparent halcyon period where they applied themselves to urban crafts, became a largely closed and self-defined ethnic minority defined by their religion and centered in towns, especially Cape Town itself, and yet participated in the broader culture. Loyalty to Britain stemmed partially from gratitude at the abolition of slavery. By Muslim standards, Malays accepted much more egalitarian relationships between the sexes than usual and were strongly influenced by the broader civic culture around them. They were in fact very unusual as a long-term resident Muslim minority in a predominantly Christian society. There is an equivalent Malay society in coastal Sri Lanka, which also had been a Dutch colony but in fact it is not easy to find similar groups elsewhere in the world. By the middle of the nineteenth century, as they began to erect mosques which at first were close in style to contemporary churches, they were also coming into regular contact with distant Muslim societies. At first, it was the Ottoman Empire to which they looked for succor and it was there that the first Afrikaans books appeared.

This happy phase, when racial lines were far looser than they were to become, gradually drew to a close in part as a growing white working class ousted the Malays from many crafts as others became obsolete. Muslims at the Cape tended to reject state education because they associated it with efforts at Christian proselytization and this doomed them to a declining as well as a minority status where once it had been feared that all the Cape slaves would turn Muslim. Over time, the apparently natural leadership of Muslims amongst people of color fell further and further away in reality.

However, in the late nineteenth century, new Muslim immigrants arrived from the Indian subcontinent, some of them coming from the main wave of free migrants to Natal and some of them coming to the Cape as their first African destination, often via Mauritius. Many were Konkani-speakers from the south-central shores of the

Arabian Sea coast of India. These were commercially orientated immigrants with economic strategies that made leading families very successful over time despite growing racial discrimination. Increasingly severe immigration laws were long ineffective. Most immigrants continued to arrive after Union, especially in the form of women brought as wives to South Africa. With exposure to English, native-born Cape Muslims of Indian immigrant ancestry succeeded in the educational sphere and began to enter the professions.

The relationship between the two groups was often close and took various forms. From the start, Indian bachelors would marry Malay girls, sometimes from leading families. However, Indians would look down at Malays and at aspects of their religious and family practices and the two groups generally socialized separately and had different places of worship. Nonetheless, as Germain captures very well, continuing themes of jealousy and resentment went together with Islamic fraternity and co-operation in the history of institutions and organizations. This account is well researched and often very detailed and is particularly rich for the first half of the twentieth century.

During the era of segregation, Malays were partly attracted to alignment with the National Party, which identified them as South Africans, while trying to distance themselves from Indians who were identified as unassimilable aliens. Dr. Abdurrahman, well known as the preeminent Coloured politician of his day, is here mostly highlighted as the exception, the first doctor of color who strongly promoted English-language education and at least a politics of alliance between all South Africans of color (admittedly the reality was a bit more complex). In his own lifetime, many Malays rejected such a perspective and the Indian Gool family into which his own children married and who tried to lead the masses into a socialist opposition were castigated by most as overeducated atheists.

Under apartheid, by contrast, the racial lines drawn by the state were overwhelming. Malays became a kind of Coloured although what was called the Schotse Kloof neighborhood in Cape Town was given a sort of special ethnic status (never exclusively inhabited by Malays, however). Malays and Indians, even if both Muslim, were expected to live in often distant, racially defined neighborhoods. Malayness was patronizingly defined in terms of cuisine, music, or language–even physical appearance–while religion was downplayed. This was promoted especially in the writing and activities of a white Nationalist "friend of the Malay," I. D. du Plessis. Whereas the old mosques were allowed to remain where they stood, it was difficult to get permission from the state to erect new ones, especially outside approved racial borders. Germain sees a Muslim identity in this period as one that inevitably led to resistance and rejection of a race-based perspective. But what did such resistance, if defined as Islamic, mean in a context where Muslims were a small minority? Prominent anti-apartheid figures such as the late Dullah Omar were privately castigated by more than just government stooges as West-Coast-Indians-turned-atheists. The book finishes with a very short section that runs through many post-apartheid issues.

There are some important contributions to understanding South African history in this study. Germain presents us with a very detailed look at organization and politics at the most mundane level for the early twentieth century particularly. This certainly should as a result be a reference work for any scholar interested in this period of Cape Town history. More sweepingly, there is a subtle understanding in his work of the difference between religious, ethnic, and racial modes of identity, even if he never chooses to theorize this difference, which can contribute to the now voluminous debate on Coloured identity, as well as identity more generally, in South Africa.

In one sense, this is a revolutionary book. Almost all the relevant scholarship has tended to use the categories presented by the state–Coloured and Indian–as a matter of course whilst then further refining discussion by introducing religion and ethnicity as sub-categories. Here by contrast, Islam becomes the defining category; the ethnic and racial categories become secondary. This may (perhaps unconsciously on Germain's part) have an unprecedented logic in the new post-apartheid situation in which South Africans find themselves. For "affirmative action" purposes, the racial categories are still used but they no longer otherwise define the rights of people in any way and may gradually fall out of usage in the way that has been taken for granted.

But does this really work? Can one really talk about people like Abdurrahman, the Gools, or Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool first and foremost as Muslims without far more attention to the broader Coloured and Indian population, for instance? This remains unproven. It is unsurprising that Germain says so little about the dispersal (and its consequences) of Malays amongst other Coloured people into the Flats in the apartheid period, although he suggests that the diffusion of secondary and

tertiary schooling is flattening old boundaries. In fact the entire second half of the twentieth century is covered rather superficially, with perhaps too much attention paid to aspects of anti-apartheid politics and its top leadership that fit his theme. The whole story of the Unity Movement, which so captivated the Coloured intelligentsia as a whole, almost disappears here. The question of interrelationship with the growing number of Muslim African immigrants in South Africa, the influence of new Islamic anti-Western political and social movements so effectively using the media, the rise of the Cape Flats gangsters and prison culture, these are big topics only superficially and briefly tackled by Germain.

There are finally two cavils that have to be introduced. First of all, as the subtitle tells us, this is overwhelmingly a Cape-based study. In Natal, the large Indian population overwhelmed a quite small, if growing, Malay element, which is both unstudied by scholars so far and unlikely to have been very influential in the overall history of Islam or Muslims in the province. This is probably also true for the former Transvaal. We read bits on Johannesburg and Durban but they are disconnected and underdeveloped. Second, the book is very largely based on research undertaken early in the 1990s and misses out on more recent scholarship and notably the emergence of important historians of Muslim origin such as Mohammed Adhikari, Shamil Jeppie, and Goolam Vahed, who has presented the first really compelling modern studies of Muslim Indians in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. Perhaps more seriously, it does not address the anxious writing on identity a number of post-apartheid intellectuals such as Zimitri Erasmus have produced. It is a shame it was not published a decade ago but then the vagaries of academic publishing do not always leave us with choices in this regard.

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